

## ERS Moves Into the Hustle And Bustle of Uptown DC

ERS has moved uptown, to M Street just off Connecticut Avenue, close by Dupont Circle and K Street, not far from Georgetown.

After 12-plus years at 1301 New York Avenue NW, ERS migrated 10 blocks northwest to 1800 M Street NW. A sizable portion of the 10-story building, owned by CarrAmerica, is occupied by the law firm of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, LLP. Another law firm, Butsavage & Associates, is also in the building. Other tenants include Technology Transition Corp., designers and implementers of renewable energy technologies, and Electronic Data Service.

The agency's "front door" for visitors is on the third floor of the South Tower, with the security guards' station, the ERS Information Center, and the publications room near there.

Upscale stores, restaurants, and hotels crowd in among the many office buildings in the area. ERS employees have found themselves in heavy traffic—both vehicular and human—outside their new building, especially at noontime and during the rush hours.

Not far from 18th and M can be found Morton's, The Palm, Le Lion D'Or, Gusti's, Bacchus, Bertucci's Pizzeria, Borders and Olsson's, the Mayflower Hotel, Burberry's and Brooks Brothers, Talbott's and Rizik's, Bally's and the Gap, Brookstone and Britches, the Phillips Collection, and Chocolate Moose.

The Farragut North Metro station is just a block and a half from 1800 M Street and the Farragut West station about 3 blocks.

ERS occupies the second, fourth, fifth, and part of the third floors of the new building.

The new Waugh Auditorium on the third floor seats about 160 people.

Also on the third floor are the Reference Center, Health Unit, Credit Union, and Fitness Center. There are three 40-person agency conference rooms in addition to Waugh. Each branch and each Division Director's Office has a small team room. There is a kitchenette on each floor and vending machines on the third floor.

The Federal General Services Administration found the new home for ERS as a preferred alternative to the offered terms of a new lease at the old building. (In 10 years ERS is scheduled to move back to the by-then-renovated South Agriculture Building.) ■



1800 M Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036-5831

## Newly Streamlined ERS Now Operating With Three Program-Area Divisions

ERS is now operating with three program-area divisions, after a reorganization that went into effect on October 1, 1997.

The new, more efficient structure is based on the key research areas that are currently central to the ongoing program of the Department.

The new divisions are:

- **Food and Rural Economics Division**—Betsey Kuhn, Director.
- **Market and Trade Economics Division**—Kitty Smith, Director.
- **Resource Economics Division**—Margot Anderson, Director.

The functions, staff, and resources of the former Rural Economy Division were integrated into the new Food and Rural Economics Division and Resource Economics Division.

The **Office of the Administrator, Office of Energy, and Information Services Division** were only indirectly affected by the reorganization.

ERS Administrator Susan Offutt listed these objectives of the reorganization:

1. To strengthen programmatic goals by grouping analysts working on key research issues into new clusters of analytical emphasis.
2. To strengthen the ERS contribution to USDA's rural development mission.
3. To eliminate senior management positions consistent with the Administration's emphasis on streamlining.
4. To further reduce organizational structures to increase the efficiency of ERS program delivery by increasing the ratio of employees to supervisors.

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## ERS Management Directory For 1800 M Street Offices

ERS completed its move to 1800 M Street NW (Washington, DC 20036-5831) the weekend of November 7-8-9.

Listed below are key administrative room numbers and phone numbers at the new building. (E-mail addresses stay the same.)

### Office of the Administrator (Fax 202-694-5757)

Administrator: *Susan Offutt*, room N4145, phone 202-694-5000.

Associate Administrator: *T. Kelley White*, room N4150, phone 202-694-5000

Agency Staff Analysis Coordinator: *Milton Ericksen*, room N4149, phone 202-694-5003.

### Food and Rural Economics Division (Fax 202-694-5661)

Director: *Betsey Kuhn*, room N2168, phone 202-694-5400.

Associate Director: *Jim Blaylock*, room N2149, phone 202-694-5402.

Deputy Director and Product Coordinator: *Tom Carlin*, room N2164, phone 202-694-5406.

Deputy Director, Research and Staff Analysis: *Michael LeBlanc*, room N2174, phone 202-694-5403.

Diet, Safety, and Health Economics Branch, *Steve Crutchfield*, Branch Chief: room N3076, phone 202-694-5460, fax 202-694-5688.

Food Assistance, Poverty, and Well-Being Branch, *Calvin Beale*, Acting Branch Chief: room S2082, phone 202-694-5420, fax 202-694-5642.

Food Markets Branch, *Mark Denbaly*, Branch Chief: room N2117, phone 202-694-5390, fax 202-694-5662.

Rural Business and Development Policy Branch, *Patrick Sullivan*, Branch Chief: room N2175, phone 202-694-5350, fax 202-694-5663.

### Information Services Division (Fax 202-694-5641)

Director: *Bruce Greenshields*, room S2032, phone 202-694-5100.

Associate Director: *Fred Hoff*, room S2033, phone 202-694-5102.

Applications Development Branch, *John Baumgartner*, Branch Chief: room S3015, phone 202-694-5025, fax 202-694-5715.

Central Operations Staff, *Leslee Lowstuter*, Director: room S2019, phone 202-694-5111, fax 202-694-5640.

Information Technology Services Branch, *Mike Ahrens*, Branch Chief: room S3129, phone 202-694-5070, fax 202-694-5716.

Publishing and Communications Branch, *Adrie Custer*, Branch Chief: room S2018, phone 202-694-5120, fax 202-694-5638.

Research Support and Training Branch, *Jim Horsfield*, Branch Chief: room S3112, phone 202-694-5055, fax 202-694-5718.

### Market and Trade Economics Division (Fax 202-694-5792)

Director: *Kitty Smith*, room N5119, phone 202-694-5200.

Deputy Director for Research/Product Coordinator: *Nicole Ballenger*, room N5117, phone 202-694-5202.

Deputy Director for Program Management/Staff Analysis: *John Dunmore*, room N5124, phone 202-694-5204.

Deputy Director/International Programs Coordinator: *Cheryl Christensen*, room N5118, phone 202-694-5203.

Animal Products Branch, *Terry Crawford*, Branch Chief: room N5092, phone 202-694-5170, fax 202-694-5797.

Asia/Western Hemisphere Branch, *Praveen Dixit*, Branch Chief: room N5131, phone 202-694-5210, fax 202-694-5793.

Europe/Africa/Middle East Branch, *Mary Bohman*, Branch Chief: room N5077, phone 202-694-5150, fax 202-694-5795.

Field Crops Branch, *Joy Harwood*, Branch Chief: room S5224, phone 202-694-5300, fax 202-694-5823.

Program Coordination Staff, *Fred Surls*, Chief: room S5186, phone 202-694-5330, fax 202-694-5824.

Specialty Crops Branch, *Barry Krissoff*, Branch Chief: room S5053, phone 202-694-5260, fax 202-694-5820.

Trade Analysis Branch, *Ron Trostle*, Branch Chief: room S5017, phone 202-694-5270, fax 202-694-5822.

### Office of Energy (Fax 202-694-5665)

Director: *Roger K. Conway*, room N2130, phone 202-694-5020.

### Resource Economics Division (Fax 202-694-5773)

Director: *Margot Anderson*, room S4186, phone 202-694-5500.

Deputy Director for Staff Analysis: *Tim Osborn*, room S4190, phone 202-694-5504.

Deputy Director for Research: *John Reilly*, room S4189, phone 202-694-5505.

Assistant Director for Clearance and Communications/Product Coordinator: *William Anderson*, room S4187, phone 202-694-5502.

Environmental Indicators and Resource Accounting Branch, *Mary Ahearn*, Branch Chief: room N4076, phone 202-694-5600, fax 202-694-5756.

Farm Structure and Performance Branch, *Jim Johnson*, Branch Chief: room N4117, phone 202-694-5570, fax 202-694-5758.

Natural Resource Conservation and Management Branch, *Robbin Shoemaker*, Branch Chief: room S4196, phone 202-694-5520, fax 202-694-5774.

Production Management and Technology Branch, *Margriet Caswell*, Branch Chief: room S4039, phone 202-694-5540, fax 202-694-5775.

Resource and Environmental Policy Branch, *Robert House*, Acting Branch Chief: room S4020, phone 202-694-5480, fax 202-694-5776. ■



## ERS Restarts Hiring

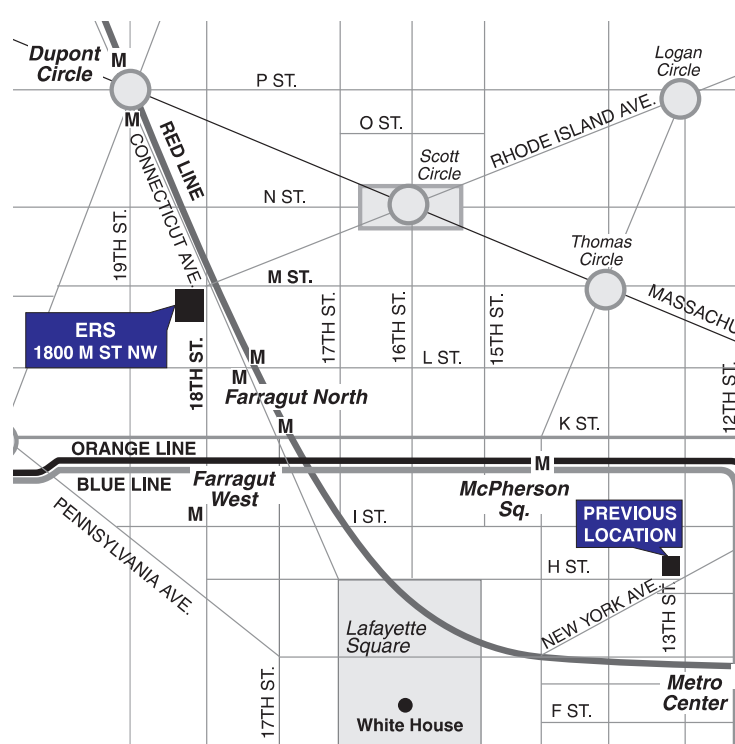
Among recent additions to the ERS staff are the following:

**Mary Bohman** joined ERS as Chief of the Europe/Africa/Middle East Branch of the Market and Trade Economics Division on August 31. She had been in the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of British Columbia since 1990. Her research has focused on the linkages between domestic and international trade policies. She has published papers on trade liberalization with divergent environmental policies, export subsidies including an analysis of the Export Enhancement Program (EEP) incorporating domestic policies for the U.S. and EU, and policy response of coffee exporting countries to export quotas imposed by the International Coffee Agreement. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California at Davis in 1991. Prior to attending graduate school for her doctorate and during two summers while she was a graduate student, she worked at ERS in what was then the International Economics Division.

**Rick Horan** is a new staff member of RED's Resource and Environmental Policy Branch. He earned an M.A. in economics (1995) and a Ph.D. in agricultural economics (1997) at Penn State University, specializing in natural resource and environmental economics. His dissertation focused on

extensions of bioeconomic natural resource management models. Rick was born in Washington, PA, and attended high school in Chapel Hill, NC. He earned bachelor's degrees in economics and mathematics (1993) from Appalachian State University in Boone, NC.

**Aaron Kelson** is a Presidential Management Intern in RED's Production Management and Technology Branch. He completed work on his Ph.D. earlier this year at Utah State University in forestry with emphasis on management, economics, and policy. While at Utah State, he taught several courses, including natural resources management, natural resources policy, forest economics, forest management, and quantitative analysis for natural resources professionals.



**Meredith Soule** joined the Production Management and Technology Branch of the Resource Economics Division on October 6. She received her doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley in 1994. Her dissertation was on the adoption of new agricultural technologies in Mexico. As a graduate student, she worked at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) conducting a survey of farmers on their adoption of nutrient management techniques. After receiving her Ph.D., she was a Rockefeller Foundation Social Science Research Fellow at the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) in Kenya. While there, she worked on the development of an economic-ecological model for assessing the impact of agroforestry and other soil management practices on farm income and the environment.

**Sandra Wyatt** joined ERS as the agency budget officer (Information Services Division) on September 15. She had been with the U.S. Information Agency where she was responsible for the budget formulation and execution of the Fulbright Academic Exchange Program. Ms. Wyatt was previously a program officer with the Fulbright program and established new academic exchange programs in Central and Eastern Europe and Africa.

Ms. Wyatt earned a B.A. in International Affairs from Mary Washington College and is currently pursuing graduate work in Public Administration at the University of Maryland College Park. She is a graduate of the Women's Executive Leadership Program, a one-year training fellowship for federal government employees. ■







## We Get Calls, and More Calls, From the Media

Reporters and editors of all sorts, from a wide variety of publications and broadcast outlets, contact ERS frequently for information related to ERS analysis, data, and publications.

Here are some of the recent media contacts:

Michael Baltier of ABC *Nightly News* with Peter Jennings talked with ERS analyst Tom Capehart to get data on the tobacco industry. The information was used on the October 7 newscast.

A *New York Times* story published on October 19 used

ERS data and comments relating to domestic outmigration from certain large metropolitan areas and foreign immigration to those metro areas.

Dennis McCafferty of *USA Today* contacted ERS for statistics on food eaten away from home by U.S. families. His story, which ran in *USA Weekend* on November 9, quoted from a *FoodReview* article on "Nutritional Quality of Foods At and Away From Home."

*Planning Magazine* used ERS demographic material in

an article about small communities in its October issue. Taking a cue from that story, *The Wall Street Journal* contacted ERS analysts for a similar story of its own.

Carlos Austin of *Channel 11 News* in New York City contacted ERS with questions about the recently released food insecurity measures for the United States.

*Associated Press* reporter Sharon Lynch contacted ERS for information on hired farmworkers employed in crop and livestock production.

A *Wall Street Journal* reporter, Tony Horwitz, contacted ERS for statistics on poverty and welfare program use in rural areas generally, and in a South Carolina county specifically, for a story in the newspaper.

A *Feedstuffs* reporter interviewed MTED Director Kitty Smith about the ERS study of commodity market information.

*Farm Journal* writer Robin Hoffman called to get data on U.S. rural labor markets.

A writer for *Popular Science* magazine contacted ERS for help on a story about retail labeling requirements for irradiated fruits, vegetables, meats, and spices.

A *Newsweek* reporter contacted ERS for information on international use of IPM practices.

The *Economist* newspaper used ERS data on U.S. exports of soybeans to Brazil in a story in September.

A *New York Times* reporter contacted ERS for information on U.S. imports of fresh fruits and vegetables.

Ralph Heimlich of ERS was interviewed by a staff member of *Science Magazine's* World Wide Web page "Science Now" concerning a National Research Council report on precision agriculture.

Annmarie Alba of *Kiplinger's Washington Letter* called ERS for data on economic activity generated by agricultural trade.

John Dimsdale of *Marketplace Radio* called ERS for information about the U.S. sugar industry.

Zy Weinberg of *Public Voice* contacted ERS for information on the impact of Food Stamp Program budget cuts on food retailers.

Kathy Graven, a freelance writer in Boston, called to get information on rice farming for an article for *New York Times Sunday Magazine*.

The *BBC World Service* contacted ERS for information on agriculture in North Korea.

A *Washington Post* reporter called to get information on farming near urban areas.

A reporter for *U.S. News and World Report* called to get information about the U.S. dairy industry.

*Nutrition Week* contacted ERS for data on the costs of foodborne illnesses. ■

## Clients Laud ERS System of Electronic Dissemination

Midwestern users of USDA data who attended a recent feedback session in Chicago spoke very favorably about ERS electronic dissemination of information.

The occasion was a USDA Data Users Conference. Representing ERS at the meeting on October 20 were Market and Trade Economics Division Director **Kitty Smith**, Program Coordination Staff Chief **Fred Surls**, and Research Support and Training Branch Chief **Jim Horsfield**.

Such conferences are held twice annually to provide an opportunity for USDA clients to give feedback about data and information dissemination by USDA agencies. About 60 people attended the Chicago session, representing farm organizations, agribusinesses, banks and other lending institutions, consulting firms, and farm media.

Although they clearly wanted more rapid, electronic transmission of basic data, participants commented favorably on ERS's electronic information dissemination activities. The electronic subscription process was identified as particularly good and a model for the rest of USDA.

Specifically, participants requested more information on livestock feed demand, China's agricultural situation and outlook, consumption-driven information on domestic and foreign food prices, and value-added data on agricultural and food exports and imports. ■



## Daily Visits to ERS Web Site Pass the 1,000 Milestone

More than 1,000 visitors (unique IP addresses) per day are now using the ERS site on the World Wide Web, with total "hits" per day above the 5,000 mark.

The address of the ERS site is <http://www.econ.ag.gov/>

The site had nearly 1 million hits from 119,058 different Internet addresses during fiscal year 1997. About 85 percent of those addresses were in the United States. The Top Ten foreign countries in number of visits to the site have been, in order, Canada, Japan, United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, and Germany.

Products and Services (28,135) and Briefing Rooms (30,951) had the most hits during October 1997. Farm Business Economics was the most-visited briefing room, averaging nearly 16,000 hits per month in recent months.

As of November 1, 1997, the web site contained briefing rooms on these topics:

- Agriculture and Food Economy at a Glance
- Agriculture and Water Quality
- Agricultural Baseline Projections
- Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators
- Farm Business Economics
- Food Safety
- Forces Shaping U.S. Agriculture
- Fresh-Market Tomatoes
- Meat Prices and Price Spreads
- Rural Development
- Tobacco
- U.S. Dry Edible Beans

At least half a dozen additional briefing rooms are in development and will be available on the site soon.

Other features of the web site:

1. **Electronic Publications**—a large collection of complete research reports and recent issues of ERS periodicals in Adobe Acrobat pdf format, which can be printed from the web site with the same format and appearance of the original publications.

2. **About ERS**—phone numbers of subject specialists in more than 200 research areas, fax numbers of all administrative units in the agency, e-mail addresses of all ERS staff members, an ERS management directory, and a link to the USDA searchable phone directory.

3. **This Week**—Daily listings of all publications as they are released, with links to complete reports, report summaries, and ordering information. ■

## Outreach and Collaboration Send ERS Staff Members Abroad and Around Town

**Glenn Schaible** of RED represented ERS at the annual meeting of the Regional Research Committee, W-190: Water Conservation, Competition, and Quality in Western Irrigated Agriculture, October 15-17 in Lihue, Hawaii. Members of the committee are involved in farm-level and regional research addressing western water quantity/quality policy issues affecting irrigated agriculture and the use of water resources for increased competing water demands.

**Christian Foster** of MTED's Europe/Africa/Middle East Branch chairs a "Working Group on Agricultural Reform and Privatization" that is providing guidance to the "Program to Revitalize Agriculture through Regional Investment" (PRARI), a major USAID/USDA initiative of the Agribusiness Committee of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission. The Commission was formed in 1993 by President Clinton and President Yeltsin as the primary vehicle for enhancing U.S.-Russian economic cooperation.

**Roger Conway**, director of the ERS Office of Energy, has had a key role in the Chariton Valley, Iowa, project involving the use of switchgrass biomass to make electricity. This provides farmers with a new market opportunity. Secretary Glickman went to Iowa in early October for a meeting to publicize the project.

**Margot Anderson**, RED director, went to Paris in late September to participate in the meetings of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Joint Working Party for the Committee on Agriculture and the Environment Policy.

**David Smallwood**, **Jon Weimer**, and **Jay Variyam** of FRED made presentations at the NEC-63 symposium on "Nutrition and Health Research and Education Programs" held in October in Arlington.

**Tim Osborn**, RED deputy director, was an invited participant in an October 22 meeting hosted by the majority staff of the Senate Agriculture Committee to discuss the Conservation Reserve Program. USDA Chief Economist Keith Collins was among other participants.

**John Dyck** and **Chinkook Lee** of MTED's Asia/Western Hemisphere Branch participated in a recent meeting to determine the

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# New Ag Resources Handbook

## Provides Unique Consolidation of Data, Analysis on Agriculture and Natural Resources

A new ERS report that has been in great demand is *Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators, 1996-97*, AH-712.

It identifies trends in land, water, and commercial input use, reports on the condition of natural resources used in the agricultural sector, and describes and assesses public policies that affect conservation and environmental quality in agriculture.

The 1996-97 edition updates information in the first edition, which was published in December 1994, and expands coverage to include more detailed data and analysis on resource-conserving production practices.

"Our objective is to provide a comprehensive source of data and analysis on the factors that affect resource use and quality in American agriculture, and information on the costs and benefits of improving the quality of the Nation's resources," said Margot Anderson, Director of the ERS Resource Economics Division.

With a combination of data and analysis, the report examines the complex connections among farming practices, conservation, and the environment. The report also examines the economic factors that affect resource use and, for selected cases, provides costs and benefits to farmers, consumers, and the government of meeting conservation and environmental goals.

The report focuses on how land and water resources and energy, nutrients, pesticides, and machinery inputs are used in the agricultural sector; how they contribute to environmental quality; and how use and quality are linked to technological change, production practices, and farm programs. By focusing on the eco-

nomic dimension of agricultural resources, AREI fills an important niche in the indicators literature. Unlike other indicators reports, AREI is not a monitoring report in the sense of establishing a baseline for comparisons of physical measures of environmental quality. Instead, AREI focuses on examining the complex economic links between agricultural activity and environmental performance and on assessing the costs and benefits associated with changes in resource quality.

The complete text of the 1996-97 report is on the ERS web site at this address: <http://www.econ.ag.gov/epubs/pdf/ah712/>

Topical updates published since the first edition are on-line in the AREI Briefing Room at: <http://www.econ.ag.gov/briefing/arei/arei.htm>

The editors of the 1996-97 edition are Margot Anderson (202-694-5500, [margot@econ.ag.gov](mailto:margot@econ.ag.gov)) and Richard Magleby (202-694-5615, [rmagleby@econ.ag.gov](mailto:rmagleby@econ.ag.gov)). ■



## Well-Being, Income Assessed in Rural Conditions and Trends

Socioeconomics is the theme of the new issue of the ERS periodical *Rural Conditions and Trends* (Volume 8, Number 3), presenting the annual review of the socioeconomic well-being of the rural areas of the United States.

"This issue," said Doug Bowers, editor of the magazine, "includes several facets of rural well-being that we have not covered before, or at least not in some time: multiple jobholding, the working poor, the elderly, immigrants, births to unmarried mothers, and housing."

He added that, beginning with this issue, the Current Population Survey unemployment rates for metro and nonmetro areas were again being published in *Rural Conditions and Trends*. The issue also includes discussion of long-run trends in personal income, population, and farm operator household income.

Much of the data that appear in the magazine originate with other government agencies, but many of the metro/nonmetro indicators are published only by ERS.

"Knowing how rural areas are different from urban areas is crucial in evaluating how policy changes such as welfare reform, the minimum wage increase, and immigration reform will affect rural areas," Bowers said.

He added that because rural areas have historically lagged urban areas in many measures, and in fact continue to lag in some, there is a need to monitor socioeconomic conditions by area of residence. ■

## Rural Credit System Sound, Mandated ERS Study Finds

U.S. rural financial markets work reasonably well in assembling capital and servicing the financial needs of the major groups of borrowers in rural communities.

This was the general conclusion in a recent ERS study of rural credit, mandated by the 1996 Farm Act. The findings of the study were published in *Credit in Rural America*, AER-749.

ERS Administrator Susan Offutt used information from the report in recent testimony before the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. "Sporadic problems do exist for certain classes of borrowers and in certain communities, but widespread credit shortages have not been a problem for established rural nonfarm businesses during the past two decades," she testified.

The committee was considering a proposal to expand the

Federal Agricultural Mortgage Corp.'s authority to buy rural business loans to provide increased liquidity to rural banks.

The ERS report provides information on the major financial institutions and Federal programs active in rural America, the performance of rural financial markets, and the costs and benefits of proposals to expand the lending authority of the Farm Credit System (FCS) and commercial bank access to FCS funds.

The study examined available data on agricultural, housing, small business, and community development loans, lenders, and programs.

The report noted that policies providing untargeted subsidies to a broad range of rural lenders or borrowers would not likely be cost-effective.

"Proposals to expand FCS lending authority and bank access to FCS funds would benefit their sponsors and some rural communities, but they would do little to address rural credit market imperfections and, at the national level, their associated costs would outweigh their benefits," said Robert Collender, co-editor of the report. ■



## Workshop Assesses Dynamic Role of Private Sector Ag Research

ERS and the Farm Foundation recently sponsored a workshop on **Public-Private Collaboration in Agricultural Research: New Institutional Arrangements and Economic Implications.**

Held near Washington, DC, the workshop represented an expanded involvement by ERS and the Farm Foundation in research on the economic causes and implications of changes in agricultural research policy.

Ten papers, authored by ERS researchers and university collaborators, were presented at the workshop. Comments were provided by eight participants from the private sector (Dekalb Genetics Corp., Pioneer Hi-Bred, ISK Bioscience, and the Agricultural Research Institute), USDA's Agricultural Research Service, the World Bank, and several universities.

Topics discussed included innovations in financing research, public/private investments in crop and livestock research, institutional arrangements and developments in coordination of public and private research, and mechanisms for transferring benefits of R&D.

The structure of U.S. agricultural research has changed significantly during the past two decades. Private-sector agricultural research now exceeds that of the public sector. The private sector is also the most rapidly growing source of funds for public research. New technology transfer mechanisms have been established to increase the flow of science and technology between public and private research laboratories. Intellectual property rights over new scientific advances in agriculture have been strengthened. These changes have important implications for how research is financed, who conducts it, and the type of technology that is developed.

This work extends previous ERS research, much of which culminated in an ERS report, AER-735, *Agricultural Research and Development: Public and Private Investments Under Alternative Markets and Institutions*, by Fuglie, Ballenger, Day, Klotz, Ollinger, Reilly, Vasavada, and Lee (1996). That report and other publications and briefings have helped shape current thinking about agricultural research policy on Capitol Hill, as the Research Title of the Farm Bill is being considered. ■



# Fiscal Year 1998 ERS Budget Totals \$72.8 Million, Including \$18.5 Million for Food Programs Research

The Fiscal Year 1998 USDA funding bill signed by President Clinton on November 18 included \$72.8 million for ERS, an increase of about one-third over the FY 1997 ERS appropriation of \$54.3 million and the FY 1996 mark of \$53.1 million.

The FY 1998 total includes \$18.5 million in funds directed for use in research and evaluation of the Department's food assistance programs: food stamp, child nutrition, and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children). These funds will be used primarily to support extramural data

collection and policy and program analysis. ERS is currently engaged in developing a plan for the allocation of these funds, beginning a process that will involve consultation with USDA's Food and Consumer Service (the agency that administers the food assistance programs) as well as the interested community in Federal and State agencies and the Congress, in nonprofit groups, and, broadly speaking, with those in private, public, and university sectors with relevant experience and expertise who might perform the work.

Final Congressional passage of the USDA budget (in a bill combining USDA and Food and Drug Administration funding) came on October 29. The \$49.5 billion measure was sent to the President on November 6. Nearly \$34 billion of the total amount is designated for mandatory benefit programs administered by USDA. More information on the Department's FY 1998 appropriation can be found on the USDA web site at: <http://www.usda.gov/agency/obpa/budget-summary/1998/text.html>. ■

## Outreach

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best ways for the Foundation to contribute to improved food conditions in North Korea. State Department and USTR representatives were among other participants.

**Michael Trueblood, Stacey Rosen, and Gary Vocke** of MTED provided assistance to the CIA in modeling the potential impact of El Nino in Indonesia. The CIA wanted to estimate likely food aid needs in the case of a harvest failure.

**Margriet Caswell** of RED is a member of the U.S.-EC Task Force on Biotechnology Research, which held its seventh meeting in October at the National Science Foundation. The Science and Technology Agreement between the United States and the EC was discussed.

**Keith Wiebe** of RED is serving on the steering committee that will plan a national conference on farmland protection to be held in 1999. At its first meeting, the committee discussed possible themes and target audiences. USDA's Farmland Protection Program is taking primary responsibility for the conference.

**Pat Sullivan, Bob Collender, and Dan Milkove** of FRED attended a Small Business Administration conference on "The Impact of Bank Mergers and Acquisitions on Small Business Lending" in Washington in October. ■

## Streamlined ERS

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The **Food and Rural Economics Division** (combining the former Food and Consumer Economics Division with parts of the Rural Economy Division) brings together the agency's expertise on limited-resource consumers and rural communities.

The **Resource Economics Division** (combining the Natural Resources and Environment Division with parts of the Rural Economy Division) complements the Department's emphasis on sustainable agricultural production systems by integrating the Agricultural

Resources and Management Study into related work on resource issues.

The **Market and Trade Economics Division** (formerly the Commercial Agriculture Division) has not changed substantially but its new name more appropriately describes its ongoing functions.

The reorganization achieved greater administrative and management efficiency and reduced overhead. No functions were eliminated. There was no increase in the agency's employment ceiling. No employee's grade or status was affected by the reorganization. ■



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